

Naturalistic and experimental study on the initial prosodic template in Brazilian Portuguese

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This work aims at investigating the initial prosodic template in the acquisition of Brazilian Portuguese (henceforth BP) and the influence of the methodology on the results presented by Brazilian literature so far.

Following the view that there is an initial grammar (universal grammar) (CHOMSKY, 1981), authors who deal with Germanic languages state that the trochee is the initial prosodic template (see GERKEN, 1994; FIKKERT, 1994), and the same is claimed by studies that deal with languages from other families (see ADAM & BAT-EL, 2007 about Hebrew acquisition; PRIETO, 2005 about Catalan acquisition, for example). However, data from Brazilian children bring complications for this trochaic bias when show the results of observational studies (naturalistic studies), which point out an iambic bias instead (SANTOS, 2006, 2007; BONILHA, 2004; BAIA, 2006).

Besides the discussions and recent studies about the prosodic initial template (see RAPP, 1994; BONILHA, 2004; SANTOS, 2006, 2007) that have been conducted by Brazilian researchers, some questions still remain. Most of these studies on BP acquisition are observational and they assert that there is an initial iambic bias, whereas there is only one experimental study (RAPP, 1994), which states that there is a trochaic bias. Therefore, the research conducted here aims at analyzing the influence of the employed methodology on the results. To make it possible, two methodologies are used in the analysis of data (the experimental – DEX- and observational - DES): in the experimental study, we analyze data of 42 children at age 1;5 – 3;0 years old, and in the observational study, we analyze data of a child (LUI) who is the same age of experimental group.

The results corroborate what has been stated by the experimental study (RAPP, 1994) and by the observational ones (SANTOS, 2006, 2007; BONILHA, 2004; BAIA, 2006) because it was found the same discrepancy showed by these studies. But there is an explanation. It was noted that the number of iambs decreases if the particular lexicon (familiar words and lexical creations) and verbs are kept out of the data. Without this sort of words, there is a predominance of SW in DES and DEX. Thus, the difference between the results of the experimental study and observational ones is due to the employed methodology, particularly, due to the lexical inventory considered in the analysis (see **table 1**).

Finally, we believe that if the study does not take into account all types of children's productions it cannot state, categorically, any initial prosodic bias. Therefore, this study agrees with what has been stated by observational studies, i.e. BP early data show an iambic bias (BAIA, 2006; SANTOS, 2007), also, this was observed in the analysis of DES. However, the statistical results did not show any significant predominance of a specific prosodic template. Santos (2007) claims that there is not a universal prosodic template. For that reason we find a trochaic bias in Germanic languages and an iambic bias in BP.

Keywords: stress, prosody, trochaic bias, language acquisition

Table 1: The role of lexicon type

Sort of data	DEX	DES-nouns (common lexicon)	DES-nouns (Total)	DES-verbs (common lexicon)	DES-verbs (total)	DES-nouns e verbs (common lexicon)	DES (total)
Word shape	Dissyllable (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	Dissyllable (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	Dissyllable (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	Dissyllable (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	Dissyllable (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	Dissyllable (Fx1,Fx2, Fx3)	Dissyllable (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)
Foot	SW (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	SW (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	WS (Fx1) / SW (Fx2,Fx3)	WS (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	WS (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	WS (Fx1), SW (Fx2, Fx3)	WS (Fx1), SW(Fx2, Fx3)
After truncation	WS (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	SW (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	SW (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	WS (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	WS (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	SW (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	SW (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)
Truncation in WSW	SW (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	WS (Fx1)	WS (Fx1)	SW (Fx1)	SW (Fx1)	WS (Fx1)	WS (Fx1)
Stress errors	SW > WS (Fx1,Fx2)	-----	SW > WS (Fx1)	-----	-----	-----	SW > WS (Fx1)
Lexical creations	WS(Fx1) / SW (Fx2)	-----	WS (Fx1)	-----	WS (Fx1)	-----	WS (Fx1)
Familiar words	-----	-----	WS (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)	-----	WS (Fx1, Fx2)	-----	WS (Fx1,Fx2,Fx3)

Fx1: stage 1/ Fx2: stage 2/ Fx3: stage 3

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